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Marketing for Socialism: Soviet Cosmetics in the 1930s

This article examines the marketing practices of the Soviet state trust for cosmetics, TeZhe, in the 1930s. Drawing on company records, industry reports, and popular press, we show that TeZhe used an array of marketing tactics, which were similar to those of the Western manufacturers. However, TeZhe's marketing was aligned with the state's economic and sociocultural initiatives and shaped by the ideological dictates of the Soviet system.

“What is *TeZhe*?” ask confused readers of Soviet-era poems, songs and novels. Today, few even in Russia know what this abbreviation means. Many (incorrectly) think *TeZhe*, which sounds French to a Russian ear, means *tovary dlia zhenshchin* (goods for women). There was a time, however, when the abbreviation did not require an explanation and was used as a shortcut for all things related to beauty. One might recall the once-popular rhyme: On the lips *TeZhe*/ On the cheeks *TeZhe*/ On the eyebrows *TeZhe*/ Where can I kiss?¹ *TeZhe* is an abbreviation for “Essential Oils Trust” or, in revolutionary language, “Fat Trust” (*Trest Zhirnost*). In the 1930s, this trust was a state manufacturer of cosmetics, including soaps, creams, powders, makeup, and perfumes. The trust held a near monopoly position in the industry in the Soviet Union and was the largest category producer in Europe.² Yet, surprisingly little is known about this once-successful enterprise.

¹The original reads: Na gubakh TeZhe, na shchekakh TeZhe, na broviakh TeZhe, tselovat' gde zhe?

²There were three trusts: *TeZhe*, *Lenzhet* (Leningrad) and *Kharzheth* (Kharkov). M. Markuze, “Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskoe proizvodstvo SSSR,” *Masloboino Zhirovoe Delo* ([Butter Beating Fat Work] hereafter *MZhD*) 12 (1936): 597–99; “Sovetskaia parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia promyshlennost',” *MZhD* 11 (1957): 12–17. TeZhe dominated the category with over 75 percent for fine soaps, more than 76 percent for perfumery, and 91 percent for cosmetics in 1927. *Otchet o deiatel'nosti tresta TeZhe za 1928–29* (Moscow, 1929), 6; V. Zhitomirsky, “Voprosy ratsional'noi togrovl'i,” *Sovetskaia Torgolia* [Soviet Trade] 31 (1927): 28; Polina Zhemchuzhina, “Zadachi parfiumerno-kosmeticheskoi promyshlennosti TeZhe,” *MZhD* 6 (1934): 8.

Scholars are showing interest in understanding the efforts of Soviet authorities to build a new economic regime. Recent studies have focused on the emergence of a provisioning system, the so-called “Soviet trade.”³ These discuss the institutional, structural, and societal underpinnings of Soviet trade and emphasize that underlying the Stalinist regime’s approach to consumer-goods production and trade was the ideological agenda of disseminating socialist values.⁴ The existing literature offers insights into how operations, management, trade techniques, and know-how, as well as entire product categories, were re-fashioned to endow business with socialist, Soviet-style sensibilities to serve the state’s political goals. However, studies do not yet clarify how particular Soviet enterprises contributed to the socialist state project.

In this article, we analyze the Soviet state trust TeZhe and discuss how its marketing operations served the state’s political and socio-cultural agenda.⁵ We show that TeZhe used various Western marketing practices, which were “transplanted onto Soviet ground” explicitly for ideological purposes in the 1930s.⁶ At the operational level, TeZhe’s marketing practices were similar to those of the Western hygiene and beauty producers, such as Colgate Palmolive, Larkin Company, and Lever Brothers.⁷ However, at the strategic level, TeZhe’s marketing was overtly

³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “After NEP: The Fate of NEP Entrepreneurs, Small Traders and Artisans in the Socialist Russia of the 1930s,” *Russian History* 13 (1986): 187–234; Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin’s Russia* (New York, 2003); Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917–1953* (Princeton, 2004); Elena Osokina, *Our Daily Bread: Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin’s Russia, 1927–1941* (New York, 2001); Amy E. Randall, *The Soviet Dream World of Retail Trade and Consumption in the 1930s* (New York, 2008).

⁴ Randall, *Soviet Dream*, 11.

⁵ Leon Trotsky notes that state trusts dominated industry in the 1920–1930s in the *The Revolution Betrayed* (Mineola, N.Y., 2004; trans. Max Eastman), 36.

⁶ V. Kantorovich, “Novye Formy Roznichnoi Torgovli,” *Sovetskaia Torgolia* 9 (1928): 5–7. Broadly, Western marketing sensibility refers to serving customer needs profitably. A firm devises a marketing program that synergistically integrates product development, promotion, pricing, and distribution. See Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, *Principles of Marketing* (Upper Saddle River, N.J., 2009, 13th ed.). In the 1930s, Soviet authorities borrowed technology and marketing techniques from the West. Anastas Mikoyan, “Dva mesiatsa v SshA,” *Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiya* [Economy, Politics, Ideology] 10 (1971): 68; Polina Zhemchuzhina, “V tiskakh depressii,” *MZhD* 6 (1936): 265–72. Trade journals published original articles and reprints of Western press on merchandising, pricing, promotion, packaging, and customer service. From 1933 to 1937 the journal *Organizatsia i Tekhnika Sovetskoi Torgovli* [Organization and Techniques of Soviet Trade] (hereafter *OTST*) had a “foreign trade techniques” section, with articles on “inventory control in the US” and “colored packaging”: 1 (1933): 35–47, and “store layout” and “mobile trade”: 1 (1935): 19–75.

⁷ See David Foster, *The Story of Colgate-Palmolive* (New York, 1975); Geoffrey Jones, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry* (Oxford, 2010); Juliann Sivulka, *Stronger than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875–1940* (New York, 2001); Howard R. Stanger, “From Factory to Family: The Creation of a Corporate Culture in the Larkin Company Buffalo, New York,” *Business History Review* 74

and directly aligned with the state's sociocultural and economic initiatives and shaped by the ideological dictates of the Soviet system. Through its rich product assortment, didactic promotional texts, differentiated prices and showcase retail sites, TeZhe played its role in promoting Soviet policies, mobilizing the body for the Soviet regime, and constructing a vision of an ideal Soviet citizen.

Our study examines the historic context of ideological marketing practices of a Soviet state trust. In the West, beyond stimulating consumer demand and fending off competition, marketing propagates certain ideas, ideals, and values about gender, family, personhood, nationality, and citizenship.⁸ In order to maximize sales by stimulating consumer desire, Western businesses go beyond product attributes and bestow their goods with certain cultural and political meanings and associations.⁹ Our study of TeZhe reveals that in the Soviet case, precisely because of such ideological potential, the state intentionally and instrumentally employed marketing to advance socialist policies. Western businesses drew on ideological sensibilities to expand demand and ensure continuous profit, whereas in the Soviet case ideology was essentially and explicitly implicated in the marketing practices of state trusts. Thus, while the trust's marketing practices appeared similar to those of its Western counterparts, the state shaped and thwarted their underpinning logic; hence TeZhe's practices were qualitatively different. In the case of TeZhe, the ways marketing unfolds hinge upon the specific historical context. At a broader level, by illuminating the distinctive features of marketing in the Soviet context, our study contributes to scholarship on marketing history in non-Western, noncapitalist economies.¹⁰

To examine TeZhe's operations in the Soviet socio-historical context of the 1930s, we draw upon company reports, industry instructions and publications, articles in popular press, and advertisements. These sources provide a comprehensive picture of marketing practices that the producers conceived, framed, and presented. We recommend further studies to investigate if and how targeted consumers responded to marketing. What follows is a brief overview of the political and economic

(2000): 407–33. On French perfume manufacturers' marketing, see Eugénie Briot, "From Industry to Luxury: French Perfume in the Nineteenth Century," *Business History Review* 85 (Summer 2011): 273–94.

⁸ Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890–1945* (Chapel Hill, 2006); Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (Berkeley, 1985).

⁹ Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York, 1976). For a nineteenth-century British example of this process, see Charles Harvey, Jon Press, and Mairi Maclean, "William Morris, Cultural Leadership, and the Dynamics of Taste," *Business History Review* 85 (Summer 2011): 245–71.

¹⁰ Roy Church, "New Perspectives on the History of Products, Firms, Marketing, and Consumers in Britain and the United States since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Economic History Review* 52 (1999): 405.

background that led to the emergence of state trusts. We then discuss TeZhe's history, production, and marketing efforts. The article concludes with the implications of our study.

Political and Economic Background

Late-nineteenth-century Russia participated in a consumer revolution commonly associated with the West.¹¹ A variety of new consumer goods became available to urbanites, and advertisements filled city streets and newspapers.¹² In the thriving soap-and-perfume industry in Russia, two key players were A. Rallet & Co. and Brocard & Co.¹³ Established in 1843 by the Frenchman Alphonse Rallet, A. Rallet & Co. specialized in perfume, powder, and fine soap, offering 675 products to Russian consumers in 1910.¹⁴ Another Frenchman, Henry Brocard, established the largest soap-maker in Europe, Brocard & Co., in 1864. It specialized in cheap soap and started producing perfumes in the 1900s. Both firms employed foreign specialists, featured state-of-the-art technology, and distributed products throughout Imperial Russia, the Balkans, Turkey, and China.¹⁵

World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Civil War (1914–1922) interrupted economic development in Russia. Viewing the market as incongruent with socialist ideals, Bolsheviks nationalized major manufacturers and set up a direct distribution system.¹⁶ Yet these policies failed to improve the economy. In 1921, to deal with chronic product shortages, the government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), which temporarily legalized the market and small private enterprises.¹⁷ The hardcore Bolsheviks perceived NEP as a betrayal of communist ideals. In 1928, Stalin ended NEP and introduced the First Five-Year Plan, which marked heavy industry as the route for economic development. While industrial output increased significantly, much of the population remained impoverished and without basic goods.¹⁸

¹¹ Raymond Williams, *Dream Worlds* (Berkeley, 1982); McGovern, *Sold American*.

¹² Sally West, "The Material Promised Land: Advertising's Modern Agenda in Late Imperial Russia," *Russian Review* 57 (1998): 345–63.

¹³ V. Blizniak et al., *Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost'* (Moscow, 1958), 77–78; Iu. Stasenkov, *Moskovskaia Parfiumernaia Fabrika* (Moscow, 1957), 3–7; A. Zvezdov and A. Mishel, *Novaia Zaria* (Moscow, 1924), 3–8; N. Vasil'eva, *100 let Parfiumernoï Fabrike* (Moscow, 1965), 7–11.

¹⁴ I. Aratov, "Fabrika 'Svoboda' za 40 let Sovetskoï Vlasti," *MZhD* 11 (1957): 45.

¹⁵ Anna Barulina, "Novaia Zaria," 2006, 11–15; <http://www.novzar.ru/>; Blizniak et al., *Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaya Promyshlennost'*; Vasil'eva, *100 let Parfiumernoï Fabrike*.

¹⁶ Nikolai Bukharin and Evgeny Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism* (Baltimore, 1969; 1st ed. 1922); Hessler, *Social History*, 24.

¹⁷ Hessler, *Social History*.

¹⁸ S. G. Wheatcroft, R. W. Davis, and J. M. Cooper, "Soviet Industrialization Reconsidered: Some Preliminary Conclusions about Economic Development between 1926–1941," *Economic History Review* 39 (1986): 264–94; Fitzpatrick, "After NEP"; Osokina, *Our Daily Bread*.

Partly due to worsening living conditions in the late 1920s, the regime faced a threat of civil unrest. Popular discontent was a sign that the masses did not internalize socialist ideals. As a solution, officials rearticulated socialism as “prosperity for all.” Stalin declared: “A characteristic feature of our revolution consists in the fact that it gave the people not only freedom but also material benefits and the opportunity for a rich and cultured life.”¹⁹ Stalin’s dictum “for a prosperous life” suggested that there would be more goods available. Hence, the 1932 Second Five-Year Plan called for focus on consumer goods and led to the establishment of the Soviet provisioning system, called “Soviet trade.”²⁰

The ideological campaign of *kul'turnost'* (culturedness) accompanied the economic plan. *Kul'turnost'* aimed to educate and indoctrinate people in socialist values.²¹ Essentially, *kul'turnost'* was a Soviet version of “civilizing projects” that defined the interwar Zeitgeist and were instrumental in constructing modern citizens.²² European governments saw a clean, healthy population as both economic and military strategic resources. Hence, state intervention into population control and care was a common practice.²³ The Soviet state emphasized body hygiene, physical aptitude, and culturedness. Culturedness involved literacy, proper manners, appropriate attire, appreciation of the arts, and knowledge of Communist ideology.²⁴

Women were the primary target of *kul'turnost'*. First, women historically represented the epitome of backwardness: “illiterate, unskilled, socio-culturally regressive, stuck in the petty concerns of domesticity, and politically disengaged.”²⁵ Also, women most vigorously resisted the 1929–1930 collectivization of privately owned agricultural resources, as evinced by the women’s uprisings (*Bab'i Bunty*).²⁶ Hence, for Soviet authorities, women stood for backward masses who failed to appreciate the socialist values of equality and a better life for all. Second, given their reproductive capability, women were “producers” of “fresh members of

¹⁹ Quoted in Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 138; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* (New York, 1999); Randall, *Soviet Dream*.

²⁰ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 119–44; Hessler, *Social History*, 197–247; Randall, *Soviet Dream*, 137–79.

²¹ On *kul'turnost'*, Vadim Volkov, “The Concept of *Kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York, 1999), 210–30.

²² Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners* (Oxford, 1978; trans. Edmund Jephcott); for Soviet context, see Oleg Kharkordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia* (London, 1999).

²³ David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca, 2003), 17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 79–80.

²⁵ M. Butuzova, *Kooperirovanie Trudiaschikhsia Zhenschin* (Moscow, 1927).

²⁶ Viola Lynne, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford, 1996).

the Soviet republic.”²⁷ As in many European countries, the Soviet Union experienced a significant decrease in population due to wars and economic hardship.²⁸ European governments introduced policies endorsing family values and motherhood, offered incentives for childbirth, and established childcare. The emphasis on the woman’s role in educating children in socialist values distinguished Soviet pronatal policies. To play this role, women were to be modernized first. According to officials, a modern Soviet woman was to engage in productive labor, exercise physical and moral purity, organize her household according to rational principles, and craft a pleasant appearance.²⁹

In the 1930s, the kul’turnost’ campaign introduced a special category of cultured goods, *kul’t tovary*, which included stationery, hygiene products, watches, and radios. Some policy makers believed that goods were “the best concrete political and cultural propagandists” and “effective agitators” because they could penetrate provinces and “speak” to the “backward” populations, infusing them with progressive sensibilities.³⁰ The state ran advertising campaigns and set up a distribution network that promoted cultured goods to outlying provinces.³¹ At the time, this culturedness-through-consumption initiative included even cosmetics.³² Thus, TeZhe came to play a role in civilizing people, articulating socialist sensibilities, and communicating the vision of Soviet prosperity.

TeZhe’s History

The Soviet government established TeZhe in 1921 through the nationalization of cosmetics manufacturers, including A. Rallet & Co. and Brocard & Co. By the 1930s, TeZhe was a near-monopoly in the beauty industry, comprised of diverse production facilities, chemical laboratories, and a printing house.³³ TeZhe was charged with the task of

²⁷ Pavla Vesela, “The Hardening of Cement: Russian Women and Modernization,” *NWSA Journal* 15 (Fall 2003): 118.

²⁸ Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*.

²⁹ Susan Reid, “All Stalin’s Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 1 (Spring 1998): 133–73; Pat Simpson, “Parading Myths: Imaging New Soviet Woman on Fizkul’turnik’s Day, July 1944,” *Russian Review* 63 (Apr. 2004): 187–211.

³⁰ Il’in-Landsky, “Neobkhodimost’ organizovat’ posyltorg,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 52 (1928): 21–22; this is consistent with the 1920s Russian Constructivists’ conception of objects as comrades. See Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 2–87.

³¹ Hessler, *Social History*; Randall, *Soviet Dream*.

³² In the 1930s, several consumer-goods trusts partook in Soviet civilizing efforts. Moscow *Miasokombinat* (meat-products trust) promoted modern canned and readymade meat products. Confectionary enterprises such as *Krasnyi Oktabr’* and *Rot Front* advertised the bounties of the Soviet life. Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*; Aleksandr Snopkov, ed., *Advertising Art in Russia* (Moscow, 2007).

³³ Blizniak et al., *Parfumno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost’*, 77–78.

improving the population's hygiene and initially focused on mass production of basic soap. Once-innovative and thriving factories were churning out mediocre products.³⁴ However, in early 1930s, TeZhe's fate was temporarily reversed. Tasked with promoting the Stalinist ideological agenda, TeZhe transformed into a Soviet enterprise that could rival its foreign counterparts both in production capacity and marketing prowess.

Polina Zhemchuzhina (a revolutionary pseudonym) played a prominent role in TeZhe's transformation. Born Perl Karpovskaia to a Jewish family in Ekaterinoslav, she became a Party member in 1918 and served as a propaganda commissar in the Red Army during the Civil War.³⁵ She made a career in the Soviet hierarchy, becoming Minister of Fishing Industry in 1939, but, charged with treason in 1948, she was sent to a labor camp.³⁶ In the 1930s, however, her career was at its peak: as a director of Novaia Zaria, a TeZhe factory in 1930, she was quickly promoted to manage the TeZhe trust in 1932.³⁷ Her basic education from the Moscow Institute of Economics (1925–1926) and experience as a Red Army propaganda worker served her well. A capable organizer and a Party activist, Zhemchuzhina was appointed to oversee the modernization of the beauty industry. She traveled around Russia and overseas to create an enterprise that could make cosmetics for ordinary citizens. The Soviet state recognized her efforts, and in 1937 she became the head of *Glavperfum* (office for perfumery).³⁸

Zhemchuzhina belonged to Stalin's inner circle. Married to the head of the government, Vyacheslav Molotov, she was once considered the first lady of the Soviet Union and hosted lavish state parties at the Kremlin.³⁹ Zhemchuzhina leveraged her position to develop TeZhe. In his memoirs, Anastas Mikoyan, Minister of Food Industry, remembers the episode when Stalin asked him to “look after” TeZhe, then under

³⁴ Ibid.; Stasnikov, *Moskovskaia Parfiumernaia Fabrika*, 3–7; Dubnov, “Obrazets Bolshevistskoï Bor'by za Plan,” *MZhD* 4 (1934): 46.

³⁵ Larisa Vasil'eva, *Kremlin Wives* (New York, 1994; trans. Cathy Porter), 136–60; Miklos Kun, *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait* (Budapest, 2003), 270–81.

³⁶ Polina Zhemchuzhina was first accused of spying against the Soviet state in 1939. After the Politburo heard her case, the allegations against her were deemed slanderous. However, in 1948, facing similar accusations, she was imprisoned. The treason accusation seemed to stem from her support of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee during World War II and her friendship with Golda Meir, the first Israeli ambassador to the USSR after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 (Vasil'eva, *Kremlin Wives*; Kun, *Stalin*).

³⁷ Vasil'eva, *100 let Parfiumernoï Fabriki*, 19.

³⁸ Given that there was an overall political support for the consumer goods, which was withdrawn as the threat of war approached, Zhemchuzhina's specific contribution to the rise of TeZhe is difficult to ascertain. However, TeZhe's public relations materials convincingly show that Zhemchuzhina championed TeZhe's development.

³⁹ Kun, *Stalin*.

the control of the *Narkomat* (Ministry) of Consumer Goods. Stalin referred to his conversation with Zhemchuzhina:

She complained about the lack of attention to a “perspective, profitable and necessary for people” industry, saying that they had factories to produce soaps, makeup and perfumes. But manufacturing to full capacity was impossible because Narkomat did not supply fats. They lacked oils, packaging and other materials to make goods important for people. Particularly, women had a great need. The trust had capacity unutilized due to shortages. Stalin concluded that he decided to transfer perfumery to the care of my *Narkomat*.⁴⁰

Thus, cosmetics became a subdivision within the Narkomat of the Food Industry. As Zhemchuzhina noted, this transfer streamlined TeZhe’s management structure. No longer subordinate to various planning committees, she reported directly to the Narkomat.⁴¹ Furthermore, TeZhe was permitted to search for source materials and distribute its products independently, upon completing the state-mandated plans.⁴²

TeZhe’s Production and Operations

Zhemchuzhina’s personal connections and organizational skills helped develop TeZhe’s manufacturing potential. Importantly, there was a political will to encourage the production of body-care goods. Still, these factors alone were not enough to marshal the necessary resources. Both workers and consumers had to be mobilized. To sustain the ideal of a workers’ state, any imperative needed to appear supported by workers. In the context of the wide-scale impoverishment of the population, it was also critical that TeZhe convince people of the necessity to manufacture and consume these (until recently) non-essential goods.⁴³ Letters to Stalin were often used to represent workers’ voices and served as evidence for consumer demand.⁴⁴ In the case of TeZhe, a letter from village women in the Caucasus was used to justify the new emphasis on

⁴⁰ Anastas Mikoyan, *Tak Bylo* (Moscow, 1999), 298.

⁴¹ Polina Zhemchuzhina, “Vypolnim Sotsialisticheskii Zakaz,” *MZhD* 1 (1934): 11–12.

⁴² Historians report that Soviet enterprises had some discretion in operational plans within the Soviet command system; see Paul Gregory and Mark Harrison, “Allocation under Dictatorship: Research in Stalin’s Archives,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 43 (2005): 721–76.

⁴³ For example, in 1927 the rubric “V Chem Krasota” in *Rabotnitsa* [worker woman] repeatedly stated that beauty as purveyed by TeZhe was artificial and unnecessary (e.g., no. 26 [1927]: 13); also Olga Gurova, “Ideology of Consumption in Soviet Union: From Asceticism to the Legitimizing of Consumer Goods,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 24 (2006): 91–98.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of letters as a medium between rulers and the public, see Andrei Sokolov, *Golos Naroda* (Moscow, 1998).

cosmetics: "Our village consumes more soap now than before. We want to live in cleanliness and culturally. Let our factories produce more quality soap, in particular, fragrant soap."⁴⁵

A shrewd politician-administrator, Zhemchuzhina used the Caucasus women's letter to secure workers' and Party leaders' cooperation. At the 1934 TeZhe Conference of High-Achieving Workers, with two ministers (Mikhail Kalinin and Anastas Mikoyan) in attendance, Zhemchuzhina referred to the letter, emphasizing that the demand for cosmetics came from the "working masses" and arose from their growing prosperity and cultural awareness. In turn, the ministers stressed the workers' responsibility to address the villagers' demand. Asking workers to treat the letter as a "Party and people's order," they requested that TeZhe increase its efforts to meet people's "cultural needs."⁴⁶

With such a mandate, TeZhe began industrializing its manufacturing and expanding its resource base. Throughout the 1930s, TeZhe developed plantations of oil-rich plants and lobbied for investment in their cultivation. Soviet scientists identified local equivalents to French aromatic varieties.⁴⁷ During this period, the variety of oils produced locally grew steadily, yet the output volumes were not sufficient to provide fine soap for every Soviet household. Thus, TeZhe also carried out research into chemical synthesis to produce oils. Synthetic oils made perfume manufacturing cheaper and quicker, facilitating a rapid and substantial increase in production.⁴⁸ However, TeZhe still lacked adequate supplies and had to import raw materials; to accommodate production growth, imports increased from 6,100 tons in 1934 to 121,000 tons in 1937 (see Table 1).⁴⁹

Furthermore, lack of adequate equipment and technology hindered TeZhe's manufacturing. The existing equipment was unable to deliver the volumes that the plan required, so TeZhe needed to overhaul the machinery infrastructure.⁵⁰ The trust tackled the task in three ways: broad-scale mechanization by introducing conveyers and semi-automated machinery; auxiliary facilities, such as glass, wood and paper processing factories; and in-house units (*Transmissia*) for upgrading and building industrial-capacity equipment.⁵¹ Still, TeZhe lagged

⁴⁵ "Strana Trebuet Mylo—Dadim Mylo," *Rabotnitsa* 33 (1933): 6–9.

⁴⁶ Zhemchuzhina first referred to the letter as "a socialist order" in TeZhe's 1933 report (Zhemchuzhina, "Vypolnim sotsialisticheskii zakaz," 12); at the 1934 Conference, the functionaries appeared to ratify such framing. "Slet Udarnikov TeZhe," *MZhD* 1 (1935): 50–53.

⁴⁷ F. Kandiba, "Industriia Tsvetov," *Ogonek* 30 (1936): 20–21.

⁴⁸ Blizniak et al., *Parfumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost'*, 94–99.

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Zhemchuzhina, "Zadachi Parfumernoi Promyshlennosti."

⁵⁰ S. Vaïnshteïn, "Parfumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost' k XX Velikoï Revolutsii," *MZhD* 5 (1937): 29–30.

⁵¹ "Sovetskaia Parfumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost'," 15.

Table 1
Dynamics of Oil-Rich Plants Output (in tons)

<i>Oils</i>	<i>1932</i>	<i>1937</i>	<i>1940</i>
Anise	1.0	0.7	12.9
Basil	—	0.2	12.3
Geranium	2.8	21.7	46.8
Coriander	78.5	233.0	333.0
Lavender	0.7	12.5	14.5
Mint	1.1	129.8	181.4
Rose	—	0.21	0.27
Rennel	0.67	48.4	6.9
Sage	4.1	9.8	24.6
Total	93.0	471.0	646.0

Source: V. Blizniak et al., *Parfumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promishlennost'* (Moscow, 1958), 100–106.

technologically. In 1935, Zhemchuzhina went on goodwill trips to the US and Europe to acquire machinery and know-how. She visited leading manufacturers, such as Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Co.⁵² Although Zhemchuzhina did not mention if any equipment was purchased during the trip, the 1937 industry report stated that a significant number of foreign machines had been installed throughout TeZhe factories.⁵³

In the mid-1930s, despite limitations, the Soviet cosmetics industry grew significantly. TeZhe dominated with shares from 75 percent to 100 percent across product lines, and its manufacturing focus shifted from only basic soap to perfume, creams, and makeup (see Table 2).⁵⁴

Overall, TeZhe blended old and new, foreign and local equipment, know-how, and techniques. By the mid-1930s, TeZhe was an industrial conglomerate, dominating the industry at home in the Soviet Union and exporting its goods across Europe. However, TeZhe was not just a manufacturing but also a marketing giant.

TeZhe's Marketing

In the 1930s, TeZhe experienced growth in product volume and variety. In 1933, its *Svoboda* factory produced six fine soaps, which

⁵² Zhemchuzhina, "V Tiskakh Depressii"; Polina Zhemchuzhina, "Dadim Strane Bol'she Parfumerii," *MZhD* 12 (1936): 563.

⁵³ I. Shneerson, "Itogi i Perspektivy," *MZhD* 5 (1938): 35; F. Kursky, "V Bor'be za Kachestvo Tualetnogo Myla," *MZhD* 3 (1937): 22.

⁵⁴ See footnote 2; Vainshtein, "Parfumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost'."

Table 2
Perfumery and Cosmetic Products Output (in million items)

<i>Items</i>	<i>1928</i>	<i>1932</i>	<i>1934</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1938</i>	<i>1940</i>
Perfume	10.34	10.55	10.61	18.06	24.26	34.02
Cologne	6.23	16.02	31.12	47.84	65.71	88.19
Eau de perfume	0.60	2.27	4.95	2.22	4.98	1.49
Surprise boxes ^a	0.03	0.28	0.61	0.67	0.56	0.16
Tooth powder	17.30	25.08	39.08	62.82	65.55	74.78
Toothpaste	4.19	0.15	0.14	8.46	14.79	14.45
Powder	33.74	27.40	59.55	67.95	54.13	47.14
Cream in tube, glass box, and metal box	18.19	14.94	23.07	43.25	62.94	40.00
Petroleum jelly in metal box and tube	17.15	51.79	69.65	60.76	74.76	36.50
Lipstick	0.08	0.94	2.92	^b	^b	5.34
Fine liquid soaps	0.09	2.15	2.54	3.59	7.89	5.51
Washing powder	4.84	27.02	28.59	19.73	20.07	8.88

^a Combination packs e.g., perfume, powder, and soap.

^b No data available.

Source: V. Blizniak et al., *Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promishlennost'* (Moscow, 1958), 82, 164–65.

increased to one hundred in 1934, and its *Novaia Zaria* factory introduced fifteen perfumes, ten colognes, and eleven powders in 1935 alone. Overall, in 1935, TeZhe produced fifty-five colognes and fifty-two perfumes.⁵⁵ Two key reasons underpinned this pursuit of product variety. First, ideologically, the richness of assortment was equated with abundance. As sociologist Jukka Gronow documents, the emphasis on product diversity was characteristic of all consumer-goods industries and was intended to reflect the emergent Soviet prosperity.⁵⁶ In TeZhe's 1935 report, Zhemchuzhina stressed the importance of assortment for "the development of the cultured life in a classless society, as per party order." She further noted that TeZhe's product assortment still "lagged behind the country's rising wealth and did not meet the needs for prosperous Soviet living."⁵⁷ Second, TeZhe had to establish cosmetics as a scientific progressive industry, concerned with public health.

⁵⁵ Polina Zhemchuzhina, "Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost' Soiuza SSR i Zapadnoi Evropy," *MZhD* 9 (1935): 391.

⁵⁶ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 43–66.

⁵⁷ Zhemchuzhina, "Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost' Soiuza SSR i Zapadnoi Evropy," 392.

Such legitimization was necessary given cosmetics' historical association with bourgeois values.⁵⁸ In the annual agenda, Zhemchuzhina declared:

All products must be science-based: every product (cream, soaps, lipstick) must have a hygienic function. All existing recipes must be improved by developing new medicinal components so that products carry health benefits. We must involve hygienists and dermatologists in product development.⁵⁹

Accordingly, TeZhe engaged in an extensive research program to augment the products' medicinal properties. For example, attempts were made to "vitamize" tooth powders and elixirs by adding vitamin C and body creams by adding pro-vitamin A and Beta-carotene.⁶⁰

TeZhe achieved the growth of product variety in several ways. First, the trust revived prerevolutionary recipes, with many newly reintroduced products now streamlined for mass production. "Red Moscow" (Krasnaia Moskva), perhaps the best-known Soviet perfume, is one example. Although among the first fragrances produced after the Revolution, it was not a Soviet creation. Red Moscow is believed to be just a Soviet name for *Le Bouquet Préféré de l'Impératrice* fragrance, developed in 1913 by Brocard & Co.⁶¹ The former Brocard's perfumer Auguste Michel, then working in Novaia Zaria, recomposed it using synthetic essences and local substitutes for foreign oils.⁶² When transformed into a Soviet scent, a pattern replicating the edges of the Kremlin fort replaced the flowers on its package.

Indeed, packaging was the second way of making Soviet cosmetics. TeZhe created new varieties by putting the same item into different packages or repackaging old products. Here, packaging gained particular importance. The petit-bourgeois nymphs and pastoral scenes of Art Nouveau were replaced with revolutionary avant-garde themes, and then with cultured Art Deco images. TeZhe commissioned renowned artists to design bottles and labels, including Sergey Chekhonin, Alexander Deïneka, and Alexander Rodchenko.⁶³ TeZhe also recruited foreign specialists; in 1935, Zhemchuzhina invited Hungarian designer

⁵⁸ Gurova, "Ideology of Consumption." The beauty industry faced a similar legitimization challenge in the West, albeit for different reasons; see Jones, *Beauty Imagined*.

⁵⁹ Zhemchuzhina, "Zadachi Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskoi Promyshlennosti," 8.

⁶⁰ A. Naimark, "Vitamizatsiia Kosmeticheskoi Promyshlennosti," *MZhD* 5 (1937): 30–31.

⁶¹ Barulina, "Novaia Zaria."

⁶² In the 1920s, Auguste Michel, the French specialist, worked in *Novaia Zaria* and trained Soviet perfumers there; his fate after the 1930s is unknown. Vasil'eva, *100 let parfiumernoï fabrike*, 20–23.

⁶³ Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions*, 143–96; Snopkov, ed. *Advertising Art in Russia*, 5 and 145.

Eva Stricker Zeisel to serve as the artistic director of the glass factory.⁶⁴ The artists took their commissions seriously. The Association of Revolutionary Artists instructed that package artwork should be a part of the cultural revolution because images on everyday products could penetrate deeply into people's minds. Hence, package design should be about transmitting an ideological message, rather than communicating the package's contents.⁶⁵

An experienced propagandist, Zhemchuzhina knew the importance of image creation. In industry publications, she emphasized that products must have a "cultured appearance" (*kul'turnii vid*). At the 1934 TeZhe Conference of High-Achieving Workers, she demanded that every TeZhe product be an exemplar of "cultured work": It should include aesthetic presentation and an ideological message.⁶⁶ That same year, Zhemchuzhina lobbied to reconstruct a crystal factory to produce refined bottles and ordered a wider use of color on carton and metal boxes.⁶⁷ This emphasis on packaging was a change for TeZhe, which until the 1930s sold up to 80 percent of its soap unpackaged.⁶⁸ The "cultured work" was to motivate Soviet citizens to take "correct and rational care of their bodies."⁶⁹ In a 1936 article, Zhemchuzhina explained, "Similar to children who were more willing to wash with colored and shaped soaps, adults would be more likely to use nicely packaged hygiene products."⁷⁰

In 1930s Soviet marketing, packages were not "silent salesmen" but propaganda activists.⁷¹ Their purpose was not to seduce consumers but educate them about hygiene and instill Soviet sensibilities.⁷² At the time, "hygiene—to the masses!" was a popular slogan carried into homes with every soap bar and echoed the Western "brightening the dark corners of the earth" project.⁷³ In the Soviet case, packages literally carried propaganda from the public into the private sphere. Eager

⁶⁴ "Eva Stricker Zeisel—Life Chronology" at www.evazeisel.org.

⁶⁵ Zemenkov, *Grafika v bytu* (Moscow, 1930).

⁶⁶ "Slet Udarnikov TeZhe."

⁶⁷ Zhemchuzhina, "Zadachi Parfumerno-kosmeticheskoi Promyshlennosti."

⁶⁸ *Otchet o deiatel'nosti tresta TeZhe za 1928–29*.

⁶⁹ "Slet Udarnikov TeZhe," 51; Vaïnshtein, "Parfumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost'," 29. The Soviet emphasis on design contrasts with that of Western companies. For example, Coty's packaging sought to preserve an aura of prestige while democratizing perfume consumption; Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 29–33.

⁷⁰ Zhemchuzhina, "Dadim Strane Bol'she Myla i Parfumerii."

⁷¹ James Pilditch, *The Silent Salesman: How to Develop Packaging that Sells* (London, 1961).

⁷² Zemenkov, *Grafika v bytu*; on the socialist objects' ideological mission, see Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions*.

⁷³ Sivulka, *Stronger than Dirt*, 98–106; the phrase "brightening the dark corners of the earth" appeared in a Pear's Soap ad from 1899 and drew from Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden"; also Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 71–93.

to beautify their drab lives, people used soap wrappers to decorate their houses. Hence, artistically sophisticated packaging continued its “cultured work” long after the products’ depletion.⁷⁴

Proliferation of product names was the third way to achieve product variety. TeZhe’s naming practices followed two patterns. In one, TeZhe introduced fragrances named after current events. For example, Pobeda Kolkhoza (Victory of Kolkhoz) marked the end of the collectivization process, Geroi Severa (Hero of the North) and Arktika (Arctic) honored the Soviet North Pole expedition, and Belomorkanal (White Sea Canal) commemorated the canal’s construction. These products disappeared once the propagandistic significance of the message had eroded. Celebrating the Soviet “Industry of Flowers,” TeZhe also named many products after then-domestically cultivated plants—for example, Landysh (Lily), Zhasmin (Jasmine), and Lavanda (Lavender).⁷⁵ Some names were temporarily popular; others lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

TeZhe’s rate of new-product introduction indicates marketing prowess more than technological capabilities. In some respects, TeZhe’s operations appear closer to prerevolutionary artisanal production than to the projected vision of a Soviet industrial enterprise.⁷⁶ While TeZhe strived to industrialize production, its packaging often had elaborate designs that relied on artisanal skill and knowledge. Such blending of manufacturing orientations reflects TeZhe’s attempts to achieve partly incongruent goals: to physically clean the masses and to help develop their cultural sensibilities.

In theory, in the Soviet economy prices were state-controlled, and thus could not function as a market segmentation tool. However, recent studies suggest that state enterprises such as TeZhe had some discretion in pricing.⁷⁷ TeZhe offered some products—necessities like basic soaps—at state-set prices, others at high, negotiated prices. State-set pricing usually meant below cost. TeZhe’s reports continuously emphasized commitment to lowering prices and boasted of price reductions.⁷⁸ Offering low-priced soaps was consistent with the ideological agenda of “cleaning up the masses.” Referred to as *narodnoe* (people’s) soap, basic soaps were widely available and affordable. Although presented as a Soviet accomplishment, the idea of *narodnoe* soap belonged to

⁷⁴ “Kak Ukrasit’ Zhilishche,” *Rabotnisa* 35 (1935): 31, and 15 (1935): 15.

⁷⁵ Vasil’eva, *100 let Parfiumernoï Fabrike*, 47–52; Barulina, “Novaia Zaria.”

⁷⁶ Vaïnshteïn, “Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost’,” 29; “Sovetskaia Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia Promyshlennost’,” 12; Dubnov, “Obrazets Bol’shevitskoï Bor’by.”

⁷⁷ Gregory and Harrison, “Allocation under Dictatorship.”

⁷⁸ *Otchet o Deiatelnosti Tresta TeZhe za 1928–29*, 27; Dubnov, “Obrazets Bol’shevitskoï Bor’by”; “Slet Udarnikov TeZhe,” 50–51.

Henry Brocard.⁷⁹ In 1865, Brocard introduced “national soap” at one kopek per bar to create and capture the bottom end of the market. In Russia, similar to the West, factory-produced soap was expensive and consumed only by the upper classes.⁸⁰ In the 1930s, Brocard’s marketing formula aligned nicely with the Soviet ideological dictates, except the latter did not aim to generate profits but instill body-care habits to create cultured Soviet citizens.

TeZhe offered some products at negotiated prices, depending on target customers and/or distribution outlets. In the 1930s, such pricing was practiced across Soviet industries, as manufacturers were permitted to trade their produce after filling the state quotas.⁸¹ This was the government’s way of stimulating production and subsidizing the costs of necessities. Historian Elena Osokina states that negotiated pricing served two additional functions.⁸² First, it aimed to extract money from the wealthy to finance industrialization. Initially used in Torgsin shops that carried luxury goods and targeted customers with foreign currency, the policy was extended to state enterprises in 1929. Soon after, TeZhe opened its own stores selling high-priced cosmetics. Second, negotiated prices addressed the product-shortage problem. High prices limited access to certain goods while strengthening the vision of prosperity. Many products sat on the shelves like museum artifacts—not really for sale but for visual consumption by the masses. With their prohibitive prices, these goods functioned to cultivate consumer taste and showcase the Soviet economy that never was.

Visual consumption was indeed the logic behind the exemplary shops, which mushroomed in the 1930s Soviet Union. As historian Julie Hessler states, exemplary shops were flagships of the Party’s “cultured Soviet trade” policy.⁸³ Modeled after high-end Western retailers, exemplary shops were intended to foster culturedness through enhanced customer service, qualified personnel, atmosphere, and assortment of goods.⁸⁴ However, the pedagogic role set them apart from capitalist models.⁸⁵ As the Commissar of Domestic Trade stated, the retailer

⁷⁹ Barulina, “Novaia Zaria.”

⁸⁰ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*.

⁸¹ Osokina, *Our Daily Bread*, 108–21.

⁸² Such price segmentation originated in the postwar “pact” with the Soviet labor aristocracy that gave them access to a middle-class lifestyle in exchange for production effort and political loyalty; Vera Dunham, *In Stalin’s Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham, N.C., 1990); Osokina, *Our Daily Bread*.

⁸³ Hessler, *Social History*, 197–247.

⁸⁴ Marjorie L. Hilton, “Retailing the Revolution: The State Department Store (GUM) and Soviet Society in the 1920s,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (2004): 939–64; A. Prigarin, “Rabota Obraztsovykh Univermagov,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 10/11 (1935): 79–88.

⁸⁵ Amy E. Randall, “Legitimizing Soviet Trade,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (2004): 965–90.

was not simply to serve the customer but to “educate the taste of the consumer. . . . Trade workers must create new tastes in the consumer, a new Soviet taste and new wares for the consumer.”⁸⁶ That is, amidst the allegedly emergent prosperity, exemplary shops were supposed to shape people’s needs to make them into cultured citizens.

In reality, the Soviet trade’s didactic possibilities were limited. Resources were poured into opening a few luxurious shops instead of effectively organizing a countrywide retail network.⁸⁷ Concentrated in capital cities, exemplary shops came short of educating the tastes of masses; still, they played the important role of showcasing the Soviet economy and heralding prosperity.⁸⁸ As Violet Conolly, an economist who traveled in Russia in the 1930s, recalled, TeZhe’s opulently decorated Moscow and Leningrad exemplary shops made material the revolution’s promise of “prosperity for all.”⁸⁹ The stores sold assortments of perfumes, fine soaps, and “surprise boxes” (combination sets) at negotiated prices or through reward cards given to Party functionaries and Stakhanovites, high-achieving workers.⁹⁰ Such “staging of luxury” contributed to the illusion of Soviet abundance.⁹¹

TeZhe’s retail network also included specialty shops and stalls; in 1935, there were 122 specialty shops and 64 stalls across the country.⁹² Modest compared to exemplary shops, specialty shops—retail outlets for one product category—were nonetheless replete with marketing. Officials demanded that managers set layouts and displays according to the aesthetic requirements of “socialist construction.” Displays were not to entice shoppers but to educate consumers about products and “develop their taste” (*vospitat’ i razvit’ vkus*).⁹³ Trade journals published many articles on store display.⁹⁴ These articles instructed managers to

⁸⁶ Cited in Hessler, *Social History*, 210.

⁸⁷ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 103.

⁸⁸ Exemplary shops’ pedagogical role was consistent with the intent of Stalin’s discourse, which “consisted of presenting his plans and wishes as accomplished fact”; Victoria Bonnell, “The Peasant Woman in Stalinist Political Art of the 1930s,” *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 67.

⁸⁹ For a description of TeZhe’s exemplary shops see Violet Conolly, *Soviet Tempo: A Journal of Travel in Russia* (Lanham, Md., 1937), 17.

⁹⁰ M. Iurina, “Kul’tura i Krasota,” *Rabotnisa* 11 (1936): 17–18; F. Kandiba, “Flakon Dukhov,” *Ogonek* 5 (1936): 19–21; Osokina, *Our Daily Bread*, 78–81, 154.

⁹¹ Conolly, *Soviet Tempo*.

⁹² Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 56; Polina Zhemchuzhina, “Blizhaishie Zadachi Parfiumnoi Promyshlennosti,” *MZhD* 10 (1936): 465–66.

⁹³ Narkomvnutorg (Ministry of Internal Trade), “Pravila Organizatsii i Soderzhania Vetrin,” ratified 3 July 1935; M. Cherkasheninov, “Dekorativno-khudozhesvtennie Raboty v Sovetskoi Togrovl’e,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 4/5 (1936): 143–48.

⁹⁴ “Vitrina i Obsluzhivanie Pokupatel’ia,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 13 (1929): 18; Shkurin, “Vitrina Magazina,” *OTST* 5 (1936): 68–73; I. Tsitron, “Bor’ba za Pokupatel’ia,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 3 (1936): 58–64; “Obshchee Oformlenie Magazinov,” *OTST* 4 (1936): 35–51.

recruit professional artists, who would utilize modern technologies of representation such as mechanical prompts, lightning, and photography. The instructions represented a Soviet-specific marketing logic. First, consistent with Karl Marx's warning regarding alienation, consumer goods should be linked to their production. Thus, displays had to represent product origins by depicting the raw materials used and detailing production stages.⁹⁵ Second, displays should present products in their historical trajectory. For example, posters of perfume history starting from ancient Greeks would help consumers appreciate a product's functional and aesthetic aspects. Third, displays had to agitate for a product, teach how to use it, and "instill it into daily living" (*unedrit' v byt*). To this end, display posters should show the product in use.⁹⁶ TeZhe shops were repeatedly named among the best in "thoughtful, artistic organization of windows, displays, and lighting and overall store decoration."⁹⁷

TeZhe took the idea of cultural uplifting from vicarious to experiential learning by opening beauty salons (*kosmeticheskii kabinet*) in department stores and hotels in cities.⁹⁸ TeZhe's beauty salons served customers such as "Civil War veterans, young male workers, engineers, soldiers, young and old female workers and people from the provinces."⁹⁹ However, they did not treat only those with skin conditions, such as war scars and birthmarks, but people wanting to correct defects in appearance and become more beautiful. For example, one article in the weekly *Rabotnitsa* (Worker Woman) described for potential "patients" procedures such as facials, pedicures, and massages. The article conveys a sense of a cultural experience that visitors enjoy there: "A patient rests in a comfortable chair with a pink kerchief on her head, a pink gown on her shoulders and a towel around her neck to prevent spoiling her blouse." As evidence, the article cites the comment from two female weaver Stakhanovites: "All was pleasurable in this medical facility that attends to skin culture."¹⁰⁰ Overall, while TeZhe's salons targeted the general population, in practice they served predominantly women. Furthermore, although constructed as sophisticated medical facilities, salons mostly taught people the fundamentals of body care, such as washing regularly, brushing teeth, and trimming nails.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless,

⁹⁵ This contrasted with the American practice, where "mention[ing] factory life" was regarded as deleterious to sales because products shown in a factory conjured up an "unhappy familiarity"; Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 80.

⁹⁶ Tsitron, "Bor'ba za Poterbitelia."

⁹⁷ Cherkasheninov, "Dekorativno-khudozhesvtennie Raboty v Sovetskoi Togrovl'e."

⁹⁸ Iurina, "Kul'tura i Krasota"; Vainshtein, "Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskaiia promyshlennost."

⁹⁹ "Zdorovaia Kozha," *Ogonek* [a popular weekly] 10 (1937): 14–15.

¹⁰⁰ "V Institute Kosmetiki i Gigieny," *Rabotnitsa* 9 (1937): 19.

¹⁰¹ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*.

repeated representations of beauty salons as a place “between a hair salon and a hospital,” staffed with “qualified doctors” and the “latest equipment,” served to legitimize the beauty industry as scientific and useful to society.¹⁰²

Similar to Western manufacturers, TeZhe employed mail order and traveling salesmen to distribute goods to outlying provinces.¹⁰³ Although fashioned on the US example, Soviet officials regarded mail order as more than a modern distribution channel. They saw it both as an effective tool to increase product penetration, which would then stimulate production, and a way “to increase the cultural and material level of the peasant masses.” They instructed state mail-order agencies to focus on distributing cultured goods.¹⁰⁴ Seeking to qualify its products as “cultured,” TeZhe put together hygiene packs of soaps and tooth powder. The trust mailed the packs to agitation clubs and schools to sell as supplements to mandatory talks on hygiene.

In contrast to mail order, traveling salesmen, *lotochniki*, who carried goods in a flat a shallow box tied to their necks, were regarded as an outmoded, “uncultured, Asian method of trade.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, during NEP, *lotochniki* were branded “parasites,” not producing use-value but profiting by “simply” carrying and reselling goods. However, in the late 1920s, *lotochniki* were reinterpreted as “welcomed helpers of the industry who assist in liquidating outmoded goods of little demand in the cities.”¹⁰⁶ Their mission was reframed as “instilling new tastes and needs” among peasants by delivering factory-made products such as shoes, dresses, and toiletries, which “are necessary for cultural development of villages.”¹⁰⁷ State trusts such as TeZhe utilized *lotochniki* as a complementary channel to overcome retail deficiency and increase its presence in remote areas.

Overall, it appears that TeZhe strategically used the branches of the retail network as marketing tools to advance its products’ functional and ideological roles. Similar to other retailers at the time, through exemplary shops, TeZhe contributed to constructing and showcasing the state’s vision of the Soviet economy and the promise of prosperity.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² “Zdorovaia Kozha,” *Ogonek* 10 (1937): 14–15.

¹⁰³ Zhemchuzhina, “Blizhaishie Zadachi Parfiumernoï Promyshlennosti”; on mail order see Boris Emmet and John E. Jeuck, *Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company* (Chicago, 1950) and for histories of traveling salesmen, see articles in the special issue of *Business History Review* 82 (2008).

¹⁰⁴ Il’in-Landsky, “Neobkhodimo Organizovat’ Posyltorg,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 52 (1928): 21–22; “Posylochnaia Torgovlia v SSSR,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 4/5 (1932): 201–7; Kantorovich, “Novye Formy Roznichnoi Torgovli,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 9 (1928): 5–7.

¹⁰⁵ “O peredvizhnoi torgovli,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 2 (1929): 19.

¹⁰⁶ “Raznosnaia i Razvoznaia Torgovlia,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 34 (1928): 22.

¹⁰⁷ “Potrebitel’skii Spros v Derevni,” *Sovetskaia Torgovlia* 11 (1929): 1.

¹⁰⁸ On GUM see Hilton, “Retailing the Revolution”; on *univermag* see Hessler, *Social History*.

Under the imperative of developing cultured Soviet citizens, TeZhe crafted atmospheres in specialty stores to help educate customers. TeZhe beauty salons showed women how to use products, thereby instilling new cultural sensibilities. Through mail order and traveling salesmen, TeZhe products united workers and peasants in consumption and served as tangible agitators for the proletariat (urban) power.

By the mid-1930s, TeZhe had reached unprecedented levels of production, offered a wide range of products, and established an extensive retail network. Although significant, these strategies were not sufficient to fulfill the Party's directive to make cosmetics available to all and transform people into cultured Soviet citizens. Thus, TeZhe utilized commercial propaganda, a tool that the Soviet authorities conceived as effective in helping the masses envision the nation's (future) prosperity and inculcating them into Soviet values.

In prerevolutionary Russia, as in Western countries, advertising was a common marketing tool.¹⁰⁹ In the early 1920s, advertising was reconceptualized in Russia.¹¹⁰ Russian Constructivists such as Alexander Rodchenko and Vladimir Mayakovsky started to produce agitation-style posters for state enterprises during NEP.¹¹¹ They believed that artistically progressive and technically innovative advertisements would help state manufacturers compete with private businesses and promote new values. Because advertisements could demonstrate to the illiterate population the benefits of socialism and serve the state's objective of developing people's sensory, physical, and mental capacities, Soviet advertising was deemed a potent weapon against backwardness.¹¹²

Soviet advertising's goals of informing people about goods and developing their tastes are evident in different types of TeZhe advertisements. For example, product announcements appeared frequently in the government's daily newspaper, *Izvestiia*. Crude black-and-white illustrations depicted free-standing TeZhe products tagged with name and price. They addressed the reading public in direct revolutionary language, encouraging them to demand (*trebuite!*) these TeZhe products. Then there were advertisements portraying happy people using TeZhe products. A typical advertisement included a target consumer and a tagline praising the product's functional benefits. Visuals commonly constituted an oversized representation of a product against the background of a satisfied consumer. Finally, in the late 1930s, the "lifestyle

¹⁰⁹ West, "Material Promised Land."

¹¹⁰ Snopkov, ed., *Advertising Art in Russia*, 93.

¹¹¹ Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions*, 143–96.

¹¹² Victoria Bonnell, "The Representation of Women in Early Soviet Political Art," *Russian Review* 50 (1991): 267; G. Natanson, "Reklama v Usloviiakh Sovetskoi Torgovli," *Sovetskaiia Torgolia* 38 (1928): 23; Tsitron, "Bor'ba za Pokupatelia."

advertisement” appeared.¹¹³ These advertisements represented a soft-sell approach and generally featured attractive and elegantly dressed women. TeZhe products were presented as an emotional part of women’s fantasies and lives (Figure 1).

Despite a structural similarity to Western advertisements at the time, TeZhe advertisements differed ideologically.¹¹⁴ Soviet advertising was not to create false needs, endow a product with hedonistic values, or induce consumer desire; rather the social education function of advertising was to take precedence.¹¹⁵ Advertising had to “advance social integration, socialist progress and personal growth for the proletariat.”¹¹⁶ A closer look at TeZhe advertisements reveals how such a role was fulfilled.

Similar to Western beauty industries, TeZhe’s advertising targeted mostly the female population.¹¹⁷ Such a focus was not only due to beauty’s traditional association with women, but also because in the Soviet context, women stood for all the politically and culturally backward populations.¹¹⁸ TeZhe advertising, along with political art, literature, and films, sought to modernize women, transforming them into “civilized Soviet citizens.”¹¹⁹ Towards this end, in the 1930s, TeZhe advertising presented progressive Soviet female role models. These models were represented as either Stakhanovites or *obshchestvennitsa* (housewife-activists), wives of Party functionaries and intelligentsia, educated and well-versed in etiquette and culture. The first type was depicted in a style reminiscent of 1920s political posters, where women were masculine in their assertive postures and often sported leather jackets and red scarves. However, in the 1930s, these images were more feminized: Pictures accentuated female forms and used scarves as a fashion accessory, not a political statement. Also, no longer depicted as determined to fight oppressors, women looked confidently into the future (Figure 2).

Historians noted that such feminization did not intend to turn women into sex objects but emphasized their reproductive obligation to society per Stalinist pronatal policies.¹²⁰ Through feminized depictions of Soviet women using cosmetics, TeZhe advertisements sought to

¹¹³ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.; see advertisements in Jim Heimann, ed., *All-American Ads: 30s* (Cologne, 2003), 24–27.

¹¹⁵ Anastas Mikoyan outlined these contrasts between capitalist and Soviet advertising; Tsitron, “Bor’ba za Pokupatelia.”

¹¹⁶ Susan E. Reid, “Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev,” *Slavic Review* 61 (2002): 221.

¹¹⁷ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*; Sivulka, *Stronger than Dirt*.

¹¹⁸ Butuzova, *Kooperirovanie*.

¹¹⁹ Natanson, “Reklama v Usloviakh Sovetskoi Torgovli”; Bonnell, “The Representation of Women”; Vesela, “The Hardening of Cement.”

¹²⁰ Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*; Simpson, “Parading Myths.”



Figure 1. Advertisement for “White Night,” TeZhe Powder, Perfume, and Cream, Ministry of Food Industry, USSR Directorate of Perfumery, 1937 (image in the public domain).



Figure 2. Advertisement for “Sanit” toothpaste, TeZhe, Ministry of Food Industry, USSR Directorate of Perfumery, 1938 (image in the public domain).

transform the bourgeois desire for beauty from a false selfish wish into a civic obligation. Moreover, featuring Stakhanovites as models, these advertisements implied that employment could provide access to goods, thereby reminding Soviet women of their opportunity and duty to contribute to the economy as efficient and productive workers.

The second type of role models, housewife-activists, were typically depicted as Art Deco ladies. An advertisement for the Belaia Noch (White Nights) cosmetic set is illustrative. It features a stylish woman in a fashionable blue dress and a hat. She sits at a balcony overlooking Leningrad’s skyline. With a white flower in her hand, she appears to be enjoying the bliss of white nights (Figure 1). Though the females in these advertisements resembled petit-bourgeois women, they were supposed to represent socially-concerned and ideologically-informed housewife-activists, involved in propagating Soviet culturedness. These women were to educate workers about hygiene, health, and proper behavior and to beautify communal work and leisure spaces, such as cafeterias, clubs, and shops.¹²¹ The representations of housewife-activists

¹²¹ Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*; Reid, “All Stalin’s Women.”

appeared to emphasize women's duty to engage in "socially useful labor" and to act as societal mothers, parenting not only their own children but also the backward populations.¹²²

Besides presenting female role models, TeZhe advertisements sought to promote the new sensibilities. Soviet authorities deemed self-improvement necessary to achieve the highest levels of productivity and collective progress, hence propagated the timely, efficient, and disciplined care of self and home.¹²³ For example, TeZhe advertisements for tooth powder reminded people to brush their teeth; posters for shaving cream, hair color, and soap presented products as fast and convenient. Similar to the West, these advertisements appeared to be selling free time to indulge in the emergent consumer culture.¹²⁴ However, in the Soviet context, a person should employ free time to build a healthy body and educate oneself in Party policy, culture, and science. To direct people to such productive use of free time, TeZhe advertisements often featured leisure activities, such as going to theaters, having family picnics, and enjoying resort holidays. Moreover, these advertisements reinforced the idea that holidays had become a workers' right granted by the socialist system.¹²⁵

TeZhe's key theme of self-improvement appeared in magazines such as *Rabotnitsa*, *Krestianka* (Peasant Woman), and *Ogonek*. Didactic in style, public-relations articles sought to convince Party officials and the public that a pleasant appearance was essential for personal development. The articles had a common structure: information on TeZhe and its products, a how-to section, and a political message, casting beauty and body care as both an obligation and a right. Consider the feature titled "Once Again on Beauty and Culture" in *Rabotnitsa*, carrying an at-work interview with Zhemchuzhina.¹²⁶ The text opened with a description of the TeZhe director, depicting her as a petite woman, stylishly dressed with well-done hair and manicured nails. Zhemchuzhina started her interview by emphasizing that "a woman should always take care of herself, her face and body, her nails and skin, and her attire. It doesn't take much time." She then talked about her own beauty routines, including exercise, body conditioning, and facial treatment. Zhemchuzhina asserted that body care was not a privilege but could and should be performed by all Soviet women, and TeZhe made that possible.

Zhemchuzhina also discussed establishing the Institute of Beauty modeled on "foreign examples":

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Kharkhordin, *Collective and Individual*, 1–34; Simpson, "Parading Myths."

¹²⁴ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*.

¹²⁵ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 36.

¹²⁶ M. Iurina, "Eshche Raz o Krasote i Kul'ture," *Rabotnitsa* 18 (1936): 17–18.

Our institute aims to help working women in the matters of health and hygiene. There will be professional doctors to diagnose skin conditions. Some skin conditions are caused by internal problems; thus, the cosmetic consultation might be insufficient. Overseas, beauty institutes do not care about science, they pursue different goals: they are set up by companies to advertise products.¹²⁷

Embedded in the discourse of science, medicine, and technology, the Soviet beauty institutes were conceived as progressive purveyors of beauty. In contrast to foreign examples, which catered to the privileged and “charge[d] big money for their beauty secrets,” Soviet beauty institutes made the secrets “available to all Soviet women.”¹²⁸ In the spirit of sharing beauty tips, Zhemchuzhina concluded the interview with recommendations to women working in cotton fields and rubber factories.

Disseminating beauty and body-care knowledge, an enactment of the state’s “beauty for all” ideal, underlined TeZhe’s public relations.¹²⁹ TeZhe set up help lines in the beauty salons, where, either in person or in writing, women could solicit advice. Similar to advertising, TeZhe’s public relations presented beauty as both a right and a duty:

In the past, burdened by child care, hard labor, and poverty, women could not care for themselves. But in our country a woman has an opportunity to care for her face, body, and costume. Design ateliers create new beautiful dresses. Factories produce new colorful fabrics. Trusts enrich shops with goods for body care. An equal participant in the building of a new beautiful life, a Soviet woman can and should use everything that culture has to offer. A Soviet woman must be fresh, healthy, and beautiful.¹³⁰

According to Zhemchuzhina, beauty was instrumental for productive labor whether a woman was a director, worker, or peasant. Beautiful people, she asserted, were part and parcel of the Soviet landscape of new beautiful homes, work, and leisure places. Hence, beauty became equated with the physical and ideological transformation of the masses into cultured Soviet citizens.

TeZhe also published educational articles for the general public and explained the technology and science behind the beauty industry. These articles propagated the achievements of the Soviet state and portrayed TeZhe as a valuable agent of the country’s industrialization. The texts

¹²⁷ Ibid., 17; Zhemchuzhina seems to refer to the US Cleanliness Institute, established in 1927 by Lever Brothers, Palmolive, and Colgate, among others, to teach the public about cleanliness; Sivulka, *Stronger than Dirt*, 229–47; Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 99.

¹²⁸ Iurina, “Eshche Raz o Krasote i Kul’ture,” 17–18.

¹²⁹ Western companies also sought to democratize consumption but for the purpose of expanding the cosmetics market; Jones, *Beauty Imagined*.

¹³⁰ Iurina, “Eshche Raz o Krasote i Kul’ture,” 18.

extolled TeZhe's cutting-edge laboratories and machinery, producing "rivers of perfume."¹³¹ For example, one article reviewed the history of perfume, noting that "perfumes used to be the privilege of the rich class of haves," whereas in the Soviet Union, thanks to TeZhe, they "were transformed from luxury to necessity for every cultured person, and became a mass consumer good."¹³² Another article, titled "Perfume Bottle," detailed the intricacies of manufacturing technology. It discussed the expeditions of the Soviet scientists who discovered oil-rich plants in Crimea, Caucasus, and Central Asia, and the successes of "talented chemists who synthesized new artificial oils to obtain the best and most powerful scents"—so that Soviet women using Soviet fragrances "would not envy those women who use Parisian perfumery."¹³³

Besides being a public relations exercise for TeZhe, such articles served two ideological purposes. First, they presented cosmetics as a scientifically sophisticated and technologically advanced industry necessary for cultural uplifting. In contrast to perceptions of cosmetics as bourgeoisie-oriented artisanal work, these texts talked of the Soviet beauty industry as a triumph of medicine, science, and technology over nature. Second, they propagated the idea that beauty is an important part of personal development, necessary for a productive member of Soviet society. The articles presented TeZhe as the key actor in making cosmetics widely available, and indeed "a part of the everyday routine of every Soviet woman."¹³⁴

Overall, TeZhe's promotion techniques were similar to those that Western beauty companies used at the time.¹³⁵ However, their logic and purposes were different. Soviet commercial propaganda did not aim to incite consumer's desires; instead it sought to educate people about products, inculcate modern habits, and stimulate self-growth. TeZhe's communication practices framed consumption of beauty products as a social right and duty rather than an individual choice. It emphasized the importance of practicing body care for collective progress and the betterment of the Soviet nation. While striving to present beauty as necessary for all, in practice TeZhe's communication targeted mostly women. In particular, TeZhe sought to contribute to the cultivation of women's culturedness and reiterate their obligation as citizens to produce and rear new generations of Soviet citizens. Moreover, by highlighting the scientific nature of the beauty industry, TeZhe presented

¹³¹ Kandiba, "Flakon Dukhov," 20.

¹³² V. Ratner and M. Markuze, "Parfiumerno-kosmeticheskie Izdeliia i Sposob ikh Primeniia," *Rabotnitsa* 3 (1936): 16–17.

¹³³ Kandiba, "Flakon Dukhov."

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*; Sivulka, *Stronger than Dirt*.

body care as a daily productive habit of all rather than a hedonistic privilege of a few. In reality, due to the raw material shortages and production constraints, TeZhe could not provide for the masses. Yet, TeZhe continued advertising its products with the primary purpose of projecting a vision of Soviet abundance and the cultured life.

Conclusion

We have examined the operations of an important agent of the early Soviet economy. Our study focused on the state trust TeZhe, one of the biggest European manufacturers of cosmetics and body-care products in the 1930s. Similar to Western companies at the time, TeZhe employed a variety of marketing techniques.¹³⁶ In product development and diversification, TeZhe heavily relied on tools such as minor product modification, packaging, and naming. TeZhe used pricing as a strategic instrument. Through low state-set and high negotiated prices, it targeted different consumers, thus stimulating consumption of basic hygiene products and controlling the demand for premium goods. To achieve intensive distribution, TeZhe set up a retail network of exemplary shops, specialty shops, and stalls. It also used channels such as beauty salons, mail order, and traveling salesmen. To communicate with various audiences, TeZhe employed diverse styles in advertising and public relations, ranging from straight product announcements to lifestyle depictions.

However, despite the structural similarities, the logic of TeZhe's marketing qualitatively differed from that of Western companies. To ensure continuous demand, Western businesses implicitly engaged ideology to endow their products with symbolic qualities. In contrast, TeZhe used marketing to serve explicitly ideological purposes—to civilize backward populations and transform them into modern Soviet citizens. TeZhe's marketing sought to physically clean the masses, culturally uplift them, and reflect a vision of an ideal Soviet world. Overtly didactic in character, TeZhe's marketing propagated self-improvement through consumption as a path to collective socialist progress. It attempted to frame consumption as a productive, progressive social activity rather than a hedonistic, bourgeois, individualistic one. For example, artistically sophisticated packaging, advertisements and displays, along with pedagogically oriented beauty salons, promoted personal development. They were structured to educate the masses on the fundamentals of body care and cultivate their aesthetic sensibilities. Public relations

¹³⁶ Nancy Koehn, "Henry Heinz and Brand Creation in the Late Nineteenth Century: Making Markets for Processed Food," *Business History Review* 73 (1999): 349–93.

articles, which discussed the science of manufacturing and the medicinal properties of products, reified body care as a duty and right. Displays depicting production processes contributed to the construction of the Soviet economy as modern and industrialized. Advertising and product assortment presented an illusion of choice; negotiated prices rendered goods visually if not physically available, while exemplary shops embodied excess. Together they served to create a vision of future Soviet prosperity. State-set prices and a wide retail network made factory-produced soap, once a status good, a consumption staple available everywhere. Overall, TeZhe's marketing played its role in "civilizing" the backward masses and persuading people that life under the socialist regime is "joyous," fair, and better for all.¹³⁷

Though TeZhe sought to clean up and modernize everyone, its marketing efforts were often directed at women alone. For example, to mark the emergence of the "Industry of Flowers," TeZhe named many products after domestically cultivated plants. This led to the proliferation of products with flowery names, conventionally associated with a bourgeois notion of femininity. TeZhe advertisements aimed to present women as models of cultured Soviet citizens, yet ended up featuring women as the primary subjects of the civilizing project. Public relations articles sought to educate public on hygiene; but they mostly talked about body care as a part of being a good wife and mother. Overall, notwithstanding the efforts to construct the beauty industry as technologically and culturally progressive, TeZhe's contribution to the kul'turnost' project was a gendered one. Similar to the Western companies, in many respects, TeZhe's marketing reproduced and reinforced conventional, often petit-bourgeois, notions about femininity and gender relations. However, TeZhe also promoted unconventional ideas about gender; it presented women as productive, wage-earning members of a new society. That is, TeZhe's marketing instructed Soviet women not only to maintain a pleasant appearance, but also to participate actively in the public sphere and contribute to the building of a modern Soviet state.

In sum, in the 1930s, marketing was an important part of state trust TeZhe's operations. In the Soviet context, the state trust employed marketing to promote the state's ideological policies and contribute to the construction of the Soviet citizen. TeZhe's marketing had its own logic and worked towards ends beyond commerce. We hope that, by highlighting the distinct features of the marketing practices of one state trust in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, our inquiry will stimulate further research into the workings of other state enterprises and different actors in the Soviet system and, generally, into histories of marketing in non-Western, noncapitalist contexts.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 148.

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